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Winthrop Holds Tuition Increase Under 5 Percent

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Winthrop Holds Tuition Increase Under 5 Percent

Quick Facts

- Tuition increase for 2010-11 will be 4.9 percent for South Carolina students.
- Operating cost reductions from the previous year will continue, and additional reductions for the year ahead already have begun.



President Anthony DiGiorgio

ROCK HILL, S.C. - Bucking a trend of **double-digit tuition increases** this year among other top-quality universities in South Carolina, **Winthrop University** officials Tuesday approved an **increase of 4.9 percent** for the year ahead.

President Anthony DiGiorgio said Winthrop will use a mix of continuing and new internal spending reductions, plus the last increment of federal stimulus funds, to keep the tuition increase among the lowest in the state, signifying that "we well understand the realities our students and families continue to face in this economy because we cope with those realities every day, too."

The **Executive Committee of the Winthrop University Board of Trustees** adopted the tuition increase during an afternoon telephone conference that will allow the university to begin preparing to mail tuition notices for fall semester, which begins in late August. South Carolina undergraduate students will pay \$6,088 per semester, an increase of \$285, while out-of-state students will pay \$11,446 per semester, an increase of \$648 (6.0 percent). [See here for tuition and fees.](#)

Total cost of attendance for students who live on campus will increase 4.15 percent overall, since room and board costs are not supported by state funds, and therefore not impacted by state appropriation reductions. Trustees in April adopted a 3.2-percent increase in room and 2.1-percent increase in board fees so families could plan that part of their budgets while awaiting General Assembly completion of work on the state budget.

Administrators will continue to keep a wary eye on Columbia in the months to come, **DiGiorgio said**, noting that while state revenue receipts have shown some modest improvement in recent weeks, new job loss in the state's public sector as a result of drastic state spending cuts could change that, as newly displaced workers in both the public and private sector no longer pay income taxes and reduce expenditures that generate sales taxes that support state services.

To date, **Winthrop has lost \$9.8 million in state funds since Fall 2008, and is slated to lose another \$3.3 million in public funding** when federal stimulus funds expire next year. If the 20 percent reduction in state funds this year had to be replaced by tuition cuts alone, it would have taken an 11.1 percent increase, officials said, adding that was never considered a realistic option by Winthrop.

Instead, administrators will continue cuts implemented over the past couple of years, and are working on shaving costs throughout operations by moving to technology solutions wherever possible. University publications largely will be limited to on-line availability only, and the number of business processes conducted completely on-line continues to grow as the university undergoes a mandatory multi-year conversion to a new administrative computing system.

Winthrop is managing **routine personnel vacancies**, filling some deemed essential, but redistributing work for others, allowing funding for more than **35 vacant positions** to be saved.

Travel will continue to be prioritized to that involving students in academic presentations or otherwise essential to faculty's professional development and advancement.

While **furlough days for employees have not been included in the plan for the coming year**, they cannot be ruled out until final enrollment numbers are available in early fall.

“We’re continuing to trim everywhere we reasonably can,” **DiGiorgio** said during the call. “We will begin this year without Winthrop personnel being under a furlough salary reduction; however, we will continue to adjust operational spending throughout the year as dictated by state revenue reports to stay within our means.”

DiGiorgio told Winthrop employees in April that he hopes to avoid furlough days altogether in the year ahead, but that will be dependent upon having no mid-year cuts in state support and having level enrollment for the year. If furlough days are needed at all, he said, the university would hope to keep their number to **“no more than four or five.”**

At that time, university personnel also were told that part of their work for the year ahead will be an initiative dubbed **“Readiness Winthrop,”** which will emphasize both near- and long-term financial readiness, while also ensuring readiness of Winthrop programming and operations to meet the increasingly global nature of what is expected of graduates in an ever-changing post-recession economy. That, in turn, will ensure Winthrop readiness for incremental growth in its overall enrollment, he added.

As far back as 2002, DiGiorgio has said intentional **enrollment growth** over time would be necessary as state support for higher education was diminishing – and that was before the sharp decline in the economy in Fall 2008 started a series of annual double-digit percentage reduction in state appropriations. In the early part of the decade, Winthrop received \$25 million annually from the state; next year, it expects to receive \$12.9 million in state funds.

As the state funding decline accelerated, Winthrop took steps to use non-operating funds to expand facilities to be able to handle larger number of students, adding a new health, physical education and wellness center, a general-use classroom building, a business administration specialized classroom facility, and a new campus center to the main campus.

With state appropriations expected to provide less than 10 percent of the university’s operating revenue by the 2011 academic year, DiGiorgio noted that “this means 90 percent of our operations will take place on a private school finance model that emphasizes enrollment growth, and our facilities are now ready for that incremental growth. We wouldn’t have been able to have planned on growth if we had waited on the state to build the buildings we need; we had to do it from our own capital resources. The fringe benefit for the region’s economy is that our projects have kept a large number of construction workers employed as the recession set in, while also getting the work done at very competitive costs. In the long-term, this capacity will also mean Winthrop will have the tuition resources in place to increase investment in retaining and recruiting the national-caliber faculty for which we are known.”

Winthrop’s 125th academic year will open Aug. 23.

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